

Please join us in honoring teachers and other grant recipients at our annual Grants Award Luncheon on Tuesday, Jan. 21. For information on sponsorships, or to receive an invitation, please contact our office at (608) 787-0226.

# LPEF is “a lifeline” for educators

## In their own words:

### Teachers feel foundation’s “sole mission is to make school better for kids”

Leading teachers in the School District of La Crosse are sharing their thoughts about the La Crosse Public Education Foundation in a new series of podcasts.

The Gold Star Educators series gives listeners an opportunity to hear first-hand from teachers on the front lines about how LPEF is strengthening the community, one student at a time.

“The La Crosse Public Education Foundation has been just a lifeline for us educators in the School District of La Crosse,” says **Steve Johnston**, an engineering teacher at Logan High School.

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**Lincoln Middle School Science Teacher Tim Sprain, right, helps a student experience virtual reality technology purchased through a grant from LPEF. Says Tim: “It’s something that if there is ever an idea that we have, we can go to (LPEF) and they’ll be like, ‘Yes.’ ... The La Crosse Public Education Foundation is what makes La Crosse a wonderful place to live and send your kids to public school.”**

Experience the Gold Star Educators podcasts online at:  
[LaCrosseEducationFoundation.org/podcasts](http://LaCrosseEducationFoundation.org/podcasts)

## Give-a-Gift brings joy of reading to students

Help build classroom libraries during event Friday, Nov. 8 at Main Public Library



**Northside fifth-graders dig into a new book about Rosa Parks, purchased through Give-a-Gift in 2018.**

Help instill a love of reading in school students through the “Give-a-Gift” event at the La Crosse Public Library on Nov. 8 from 4 to 7 p.m.

For the second year, the Library is partnering with the School District of La Crosse and the La Crosse Public Education Foundation to provide books for elementary school classroom libraries, putting a variety of great books right at the fingertips of students. Last year, donors generously supported these efforts and \$10,000 went to buy books for 27 5th-grade classrooms.

Hundreds of books will be available for attendees to donate in honor of someone special. Net proceeds from donations made for the classroom libraries will be used to purchase books especially selected this year to interest 4th-grade students.

If you are unable to attend, you may donate online through LPEF, or send a donation by Nov. 8 to either the Public Library or the La Crosse Public Education Foundation. For more details, or to give now online, go to:

[bit.ly/give-a-gift2019](http://bit.ly/give-a-gift2019)

## **In their own words:**

### **Amanda Wolfram on LPEF: “I just love that they are there 100% for our kids.”**

**Amanda Wolfram**, music teacher at North Woods International, says LPEF helps address student needs through the Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) program. RAK empowers teachers “to know what are the greatest needs of your kids - for that family, for that kid, what do they need and how can we meet it. Realistically, if those basic needs are not met, then how are they going to learn?”

**PaHoua Vang**, preschool teacher at Hintgen Elementary, says: “Without the La Crosse Public Education Foundation, we wouldn’t be able to input all of these amazing activities, and amazing gardens and presenters and incorporate all of this into our school. Without (LPEF), we would really struggle with all the successful things we are doing in class.”

**Tracy Taylor-Johnson**, a third-grade teacher at Summit Environmental School, says LPEF “has always supported things that I think are important for me in my classroom ... and just have had such an impact on the kids.” She adds: “I do love what I’m doing and I do feel very fortunate that I have written grants that ... (LPEF) has been able to grant, and that I can go and make a difference.”

**Rick Blasing**, a counselor at Lincoln Middle School, says LPEF is “inspiring, it’s encouraging educators ... providing the creative fuel for all of the extraordinary possibilities of what the teacher could do with that funding.”

**Jeanne Halderson**, a seventh-grade teacher at Longfellow Middle School, says: “What I love about (LPEF) is their sole mission is to make school better for kids in La Crosse.” In addition to receiving grants, she and others use RAK funding to address the “hidden secret” of students with needs for food and basics, including underwear, socks and undergarments for girls. “It’s something most



**Top: PaHoua Vang, a Hintgen Elementary pre-school teacher, helps a student with a puzzle to learn counting from 1 to 10.**

**Right: Tracy Taylor-Johnson works with her third-graders at Summit Environmental School.**



**Below right: Carrie Wuensch-Harden, the library and HPL teacher at Hamilton/SOTA I, helps a student learn how to use an Osmo game system purchased with LPEF grant money.**

people just assume, ‘Hey, everybody has underwear,’ but they don’t. I don’t know what we’d do without Random Acts of Kindness.”

**Carrie Wuensch-Harden**, library-HPL teacher at Hamilton/SOTA I Elementary School, is proud of the many grants she has received, for everything from Osmo systems in the library to washable bowls and cups for students to use in the cafeteria. She says LPEF “has done a fantastic job supporting our school. You need to know that because of that, I’ve really been able to change how I teach.”



# LPEF bringing new funds to District

## Grant-writing initiative nets about \$125,000 in 18 months

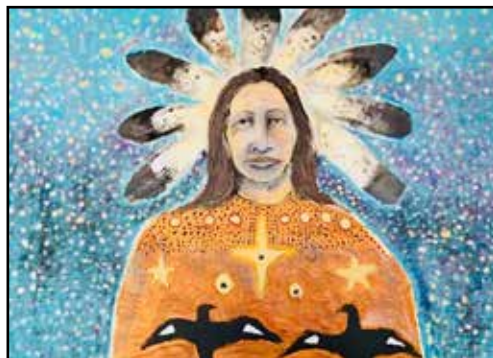
Students in the School District of La Crosse are benefiting from a range of opportunities - including family nights, classroom library books, choral risers, wireless microphones and adaptive sports equipment - due to a new fundraising effort by the La Crosse Public Education Foundation.

Since Spring 2018, LPEF has obtained outside private grant funding totaling more than \$125,000 to support a variety of District projects.

Denise Vujnovich, a retired vice president for student development and success at Western Technical College, was hired in April 2018 as a part-time grants coordinator for LPEF. She works with teachers and administrators to identify needs and seek out grant funding from a variety of local, regional and national sources.

Through early October, Vujnovich has helped District staff obtain about 20 grants from various sources, totaling more than \$125,000. Here is a partial list of grants received:

- \$36,657 total from the La Crosse Community Foundation and Rotary Works Foundation toward purchase of a portable wireless microphone system for theater arts. A \$5,000 LPEF Gold Star Grant also was awarded for the system.
- \$28,788 from the Mayo Clinic Health System Inclusive Health and Recreation Funding for the purchase of 12 sport wheelchairs for the middle and high school unified PE classes.
- \$10,000 from the La Crosse Public Library Give-a-Gift partnership for 5th grade classroom libraries throughout the district.
- \$10,000 from the Cleary-Kumm Foundation to purchase fitness equipment for the Central High School athletic program.
- \$10,000 from the Cleary-Kumm Foundation for the purchase of performance risers at Lincoln Middle School.
- \$8,750 total over two years from the Fowler and Hammer Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation and Rotary Works Foundation to fund Amity Interns at North Woods International Elementary School.



**Native American artist and singer-songwriter Bill Miller worked with students at Northside Elementary school, with part of his visit funded through a La Crosse Community Foundation June Kjome Fund grant obtained by LPEF. In one day, Miller worked with students to create a beautiful work of art for the school to hang as a reminder of his visit.**

- \$7,500 from the Mary Grace Sieber Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation toward buying two inclusive recumbent cardio trainers for students and community members who have chronic pain, disabilities or are rehabbing.
- \$5,000 from the Charles F. Mathy Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation toward classroom libraries.
- \$3,000 from the Onalaska Sam's Club and the Walmart Foundation for the Helping Readers program and Family Nights at Northside Elementary Coulee Montessori School.
- \$2,000 from the Marck Family Foundation for performance risers at Longfellow Middle School. Longfellow also received

- a \$5,000 LPEF Gold Star Grant for risers.
- \$1,650 from the June Kjome Justice & Peace Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation for the Teaching Through the Lens of Social Justice project. A \$4,000 Gold Star Grant also went to the project.
- \$1,050 from the June Kjome Justice & Peace Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation to bring Native American artist and performer Bill Miller to Northside Elementary to promote awareness of the contributions of the Native American culture with students and their families.

To discuss grant opportunities, contact Denise Vujnovich at 789-8954 or [denise@lacrosseeducationfoundation.org](mailto:denise@lacrosseeducationfoundation.org)

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### La Crosse Public Education Foundation

P.O. Box 1811  
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## Please thank and support these major sponsors of LPEF

2019 Charlie Miller Bowtie Classic  
 presenting sponsor



Grants Award Luncheon  
 presenting sponsor



### Bowtie Classic raises \$36,000 for La Crosse schools

The seventh Charlie Miller Bowtie Classic Golf Outing and Knowledge Open teed off on Saturday, Aug. 31 with 110 golfers at Forest Hills Golf Course. The event raised nearly \$36,000 to support classroom grants and other programs of the La Crosse Public Education Foundation. In addition, \$1,000 in grants were awarded to schools represented by foursomes at the event, which is the largest annual fundraiser for LPEF.



**Special thanks to the family of the late Dr. Charles Miller III for support of the Bowtie Classic, including helping at the event and underwriting the cost of golfing for two teams of La Crosse school students.**

### Other Major Sponsors of the 2019 Bowtie Classic



### LPEF 2019-20 Foundation for Learning Sponsors

The following businesses provide at least \$1,000 annually to LPEF outside of event sponsorships. Support is used for general operations and greatest need. For information, please contact LPEF Executive Director David Stoeffler at (608) 787-0226 or email: [david@lacrosseeducationfoundation.org](mailto:david@lacrosseeducationfoundation.org).

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### 2019 Random Acts of Kindness Sponsor



# Randy and Lynn Nelson create LPEF fund

## Grants to support physical fitness, servant leadership and character development

Superintendent of Schools Randy Nelson and his wife Lynn have announced plans to create an LPEF endowment fund that will generate annual grants to encourage physical fitness, or servant leadership skills and character development.

At the District's annual Back-to-School event Aug. 29, Nelson was joined by his family in announcing the fund, which expects to award its first grants as early as the 2021-22 school year.

Nelson has been superintendent of La Crosse schools since 2011 and joined the District in 2008 as associate superintendent after many years as a teacher and administrator in Minnesota.

**"Together we have dedicated more than 70 years as public educators, and we are convinced that our future relies on healthy, high character students dedicated to serving others."**

**- Randy and Lynn Nelson**

Lynn Nelson is a native of Westby and retired in 2018 after 35 years as a physical education teacher, most recently in Rochester, Minn.

In addition to a major personal gift, the Nelsons are seeking other donations in support of the fund, with a goal to raise \$50,000 in total.



**Lynn and Randy Nelson with their granddaughter, Anna.**

For information on donating to the Nelson Fund, contact the LPEF office at (608) 787-0226.

## New Thompson endowment fund supports teacher, staff recognition

### Tom & Jean Heyt Thompson Fund awards first grants

Teachers at Logan High School and North Woods International School received surprise grants - and applause from their peers at a back-to-school gathering - due to a new LPEF endowment fund.

Drs. Tom and Jean Heyt Thompson, longtime supporters of public education and partners in creating the Thompson Animal Medical Center, are funding an endowment specifically to annually support recognition programs for teachers and staff in the School District of La Crosse. The recognition might include grants to teachers, gift cards, or special events.

Tom was a member of the Board of Education for 15 years before retiring this past spring. And he was



**From left, Tom and Jean Heyt Thompson with grant recipients Kate Hooper and Tricia Gibbons. Hooper and Gibbons were honored at the District Back-to-School event Aug. 29.**

deeply involved in local schools for nearly 40 years, including longtime service as chairman of the District Wide Parent Committee. Tom recently became a member of the LPEF Board of Directors.

"We know first-hand the quality of the teachers, administrators, cooks, custodians and so many other staff members in our schools," Tom Thompson said in explaining the new fund. "We know the sacrifices they make to better serve their students."

We think this is a great way to show our appreciation."

Kate Hooper from North Woods and Tricia Gibbons from Logan High were the first to be recognized, each receiving a \$250 grant to be used in their classrooms. Kate and Tricia each was named last year as Teacher Fellows through the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation.



Tracy Taylor-Johnson is one of the La Crosse teachers sharing insights in a new podcast series from LPEF. Learn more inside.

## Support a school. Raise a community.

### La Crosse Public Education Foundation

PO Box 1811  
La Crosse, WI 54602-1811

### In the News

#### **New members elected to LPEF Board:**

Three new members joined the Board of the La Crosse Public Education Foundation this summer and fall. Selected for three-year terms were: Amanda Westphal, wellness education specialist with Gundersen Health System; Kelly Krieg-Sigman, recently retired director of the La Crosse Public Library; and Dr. Tom Thompson, retired veterinarian and recently retired member of the Board of Education.



From left: Amanda Westphal, Kelly Krieg-Sigman, and Dr. Tom Thompson.

**Conductor Wannabe raises \$5,037 for LPEF and music grants:** Brad Quarberg, a member of the Board of Education and also a member of the LPEF Board, finished second in the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra's annual Conductor Wannabe competition. Quarberg won the chance to conduct "Pomp and Circumstance" at the June 8 concert of the Symphony, raising a total of \$10,074 — with half the money coming to LPEF to be used in support of school music programs.

### About LPEF

The La Crosse Public Education Foundation (LPEF) was created 31 years ago to enhance learning opportunities for students in the School District of La Crosse. LPEF expects to provide nearly \$350,000 in support to District programs in 2019.

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